

OUTDOOR RECREATION PROJECT SELECTION SYSTEM

Massachusetts Urban Self-Help, Strategic Urban Recreation Fund, and Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund Programs

In order to distribute limited grant funds among an overwhelming number of applicants, a project selection system has been developed for outdoor recreation projects. The selection system includes an interagency review of each project and the draft ratings and funding recommendations. For Fiscal Year 2008 projects, the Sustainable Development Criteria issued by the Office of Commonwealth Development will be utilized. Communities may use scores from Fiscal Year 2006 or submit a new Commonwealth Capital application. The rating system considers demographic, social, environmental, and project quality factors in order to identify those projects that best protect natural resources in communities that have the greatest need for financial assistance and that have made efforts to implement their open space plans in coordination with local planning for sustainable growth.

Interagency Review

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Interagency Lands Committee (ILC) reviews conservation land acquisition project applications to ensure project coordination with state agency programs, executive orders and environmentally sound land use policies. The Committee consists of representatives from the Departments of Conservation and Recreation, Fish and Game, and Agricultural Resources, and EOEEA personnel. The ILC considers each project and its impact on the statewide conservation and recreation vision articulated in *An Open Space Plan for Massachusetts: A Partnership*, and *Massachusetts Outdoors 2000 – The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP). DCS coordinates the interagency review of all applications and submits all comments and recommendations to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for final funding decisions.

In reviewing applications and developing their recommendations to the Director of Conservation Services, the ILC considers:

1. Demographics

Three categories are evaluated by DCS to calculate a community's demographic score. Communities with higher Population Density, lower Median Income, and higher Percentage of Households Below Poverty Level receive higher demographic scores. (Scores are calculated by DCS; therefore, there is no need to submit any statistics or narrative on your community's behalf.)

2. Community Profile Score

Environmental Justice Community – calculated by EOEEA's EJ Director.

State Designated Economic Target Area – obtained from Department of Economic Development

Smart Growth Score – EOEEA encourages land use decisions that protect environmental quality and preserve natural resources. Unplanned growth not only threatens the environment, it also can adversely affect the timely provision of needed infrastructure and has a tremendous fiscal impact on communities. This impact, in turn, puts future economic opportunities at risk. Please submit your community's FY06 Commonwealth Capital score, available online at www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html, to obtain your score. Please direct any questions that you have to (617) 626-4949.

3. Project Quality

- Consistency with EOEEA policies, including a cooperative grant effort, the development of a long term maintenance plan, protection of water-based recreation, regional or statewide projects, brownfields redevelopment, innovative water reuse/recharge, and park development associated with ecological restoration projects, such as dam removal
- Addition of new parkland by acquisition or rededication
- Green infrastructure
- Consistency with *Massachusetts Outdoors 2006 – The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*

4. Partnerships

EOEEA, like any other open space protection agency or organization, must have other financial partners. Projects that involve financial contribution from more than one municipality, or from a nonprofit organization, will be given higher consideration. Projects that obtain technical assistance from other organizations will also benefit in the rating system.

SELECTION NOTES:

Preservation of Agricultural Land

Executive Order #193 discourages the irreversible conversion of the Commonwealth's productive agricultural land base. State grants shall not be used to encourage the irreversible conversion of agricultural land to other uses when feasible alternatives are available. In the event that all feasible alternatives have been explored, and the conversion of suitable agricultural lands to non-agricultural use remains the only feasible alternative to protection of open space, a mitigation plan must be developed to be eligible for reimbursement under a state grant. Project that would convert any prime agricultural lands should consult with the Department Agricultural Resources at (617) 626-1700 prior to submitting an application.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Policy and Criteria for Selection of Projects

Note that federal funds are also made available to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. These state agencies therefore also compete with municipalities for federal funding. All state agency projects will be rated and ranked using the Land and Water Conservation Fund Rating Sheet (attached). Municipal projects not ranking high enough for available state funding for Self-Help and Urban Self-Help will be evaluated using the Land and Water Conservation Fund Rating System, along with the state projects. The highest ranking projects will be funded with available federal funds.

RATING SYSTEM for Outdoor Recreation Projects

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	Description	Partial Points	Max
DEMOGRAPHICS	Population Density	Figures are obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1-4	5
	Median Income	Figures are obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1-4	5
	Percentage of Households below Poverty Level	Figures are obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1-4	5
COMMUNITY PROFILE SCORE	Environmental Justice Community	Calculated by EOEEA's Environmental Justice Director	1-4	5
	Sustainable Development Criteria – Smart Growth Score	FY06 Commonwealth Capital application score should be used (see http://www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html for details). If your community has not yet applied for a Comm Cap score, complete an application on or before July 31, 2007 to be eligible for points under this category.	1-29	30
	Affordable Housing	Component of an affordable housing project		2
PROJECT QUALITY	Consistency with current EOEEA policies	Project located in underserved and underrepresented neighborhood and will act to stabilize community		4
		Conversion of brownfields to “greenfields” and formal park dedication		4
		Innovative water recharge and reuse component i.e. on-site stormwater control system (including low impact development – more info at www.mass.gov/envir/lid/default.htm) or reuse of treated wastewater as irrigation water for playing fields		4
		Project is connected with or will enhance understanding of an environmental restoration project such as a dam removal		4
		Project is located in “urban center” close to public transportation and other services		4
	Addition of newly dedicated parkland by acquisition or by rededication	Acquisition or formal dedication of parcel with unique natural (rare species, ACEC, geologic, or landscape feature), cultural resources (historical or archaeological or site culturally important to community), or wetlands	1-3	4
		Project that expands municipality's park and outdoor recreational facilities through acquisition or development of a new park or rededication		
	Green Infrastructure	Acquisition, development, or renovation project that protects or enhances water-based recreation	2	4
		Project that is part of a linked system (geographical) of conservation, recreation, or protected land areas or facilities such as greenways, river corridors, or enhancement of project previously assisted with DCS funds, or contains resources identified in Five-Year Watershed Action Plans (www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm)	1-3	4
	Regional Impact	Any project qualifying as regional or statewide (see definitions at www.mass.gov/envir/dcs) – must fill out Usage Report	2	3
	Public Hearing	Municipality has conducted a public hearing on project, with outreach in Environmental Justice neighborhoods		2
	Cooperative Project	Joint cooperative project between applicant and other municipality or non-profit organization involving funding and/or commitment for future park maintenance	2	3
	Outdoor Classroom	Site offers interpretive services and/or environmental education	1	2
	Consistency with SCORP and municipality's OSRP	Points awarded based on how high activity or facility rates under Chapter 5: The Regional Perspective	1-3	4
		Points awarded based on how highly rated project was in community's Open Space and Recreation Plan	1	2
TOTAL				100